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Why Didn't Somebody Listen?

President Nixon's reorganization of the machinery for defense and diplomatic intelligence is in order. One of the revelations of the Pentagon Papers was that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) called the shots correctly all along. The American people may have been sold a bill of goods about the domino theory, the marvelous effects of bombing and other justifications for continuing this miserable disaster, but the CIA was not.

Writing in the January, 1972, issue of Foreign Affairs, Chester L. Cooper pays a compliment and asks a question: "Confronting one of the most passion-laden, persistent and dangerous foreign crises the United States has confronted since World War II, they (the CIA's estimators and analysts) consistently seem to have kept their cool, they remained impeccably objective, and they have been right. But if the record was so good, why wasn't anyone Up There listening?"

Possibilities are that the men Up There didn't want to hear and began to neglect the CIA's advice. They may have been overwhelmed by the successes of the United States, principally in Europe, and convinced of American might and right. President Johnson, specifically, didn't want to be the first President to lose a war. President Nixon's present policy is open to the criticism of being tuned to domestic politics and the November election.

Whatever the possibilities, Mr. Nixon's plan puts the director of the CIA in a position where he can be heard more easily. The director has

been relieved of day-to-day responsibilities and has been given more authority over all the government's intelligence authorities. He can always be overruled; the CIA does not make policy. There may be occasions when he should be overruled. But he cannot be ignored quite so easily as was the CIA during the late and continuing tragedy.